

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

Claim 1. (Currently Amended) A method for inhibiting the activation of a substance degrading brain natriuretic peptide ~~degradation of mammalian natriuretic peptides~~ in a specimen, which comprises consisting of:

placing the specimen into a container ~~in the absence of any degradation inhibiting agents~~, wherein the face coming into contact with the specimen is made of or coated with a material selected from the group consisting of silicone and plastics,

~~wherein said material inhibits the activation of a substance, which once activated, degrades the mammalian natriuretic peptides.~~

Claim 2. (Canceled).

Claim 3. (Currently Amended) The method as claimed in claim 1 ~~or 2~~, wherein said specimen is obtained from a human, dog, pig, rat or mouse.

Claim 4. (Canceled).

Claim 5. (Currently Amended) A method for inhibiting the activation of a substance degrading brain natriuretic peptide ~~degradation of mammalian natriuretic peptides~~ in a specimen, which comprises consisting of:

placing the specimen into a container in the absence of aprotinin, wherein the face coming into contact with the specimen is made of or coated with a material selected from the group consisting of silicone and plastics,

~~wherein said material inhibits the activation of a substance, which once activated, degrades the mammalian natriuretic peptides.~~

Claim 6. (Currently Amended) A method for measuring brain ~~mammalian~~ natriuretic peptides in a specimen, which comprises consisting of the steps of:

placing the specimen into a container ~~in the absence of any degradation inhibiting agents~~, wherein the face coming into contact with the specimen is made of or coated with a material selected from the group consisting of silicone and plastics, ~~wherein said~~

~~material inhibits the activation of a substance, which once activated, degrades the mammalian natriuretic peptides; and~~

measuring the mammalian natriuretic peptides by standard means.

Claims 7-11. (Canceled).

Claim 12. (New) A method for inhibiting the activation of a substance degrading brain natriuretic peptide in whole blood or blood plasma, which comprises

placing the whole blood or blood plasma into a container, wherein the face coming into contact with the whole blood or blood plasma is made of or coated with a material selected from the group consisting of silicone and plastics.

Claim 13. (New) A method for inhibiting the degradation of brain natriuretic peptide in a specimen, consisting of

placing the specimen into a container, wherein the face coming into contact with the specimen is made of or coated with a material selected from the group consisting of silicone and plastics.